

WHAT IF I DON'T PASS THE GRADUATION QUALIFYING EXAMINATION (GQE)

This article discusses ways an Indiana student who is a child with a disability (as defined in IC 20-35-1-2; i.e. eligible for special education, has an IEP) may meet the Graduation Qualifying Examination (GQE) requirement necessary for a diploma if the student does not pass the GQE. The “evidence-based waiver” is the focus of this article since this “waiver” is most frequently applicable to students with disabilities in meeting graduation and diploma requirements.

All students must meet state and local graduation requirements **and** meet the Graduation Qualifying Examination (GQE) requirement in order to earn an Indiana high school diploma. There are several ways a student can meet the GQE requirement, including:

***Pass the GQE;**

***Fulfill the requirements of the GQE CORE 40 waiver;**

***Fulfill the requirements of the GQE Evidence-based waiver”** [for students **without a disability** see IC 20-32-4-4; for students **with a disability** see IC 20-32-4-5... the requirements are similar, but not identical!]; and

***Through the “workforce readiness assessment waiver.”**

Additional information is available at: <http://doe.in.gov/istep/gqe/welcome.html>

All students are expected to participate in statewide or districtwide testing. High school students with disabilities who expect to earn a diploma must take the GQE as often as required by their IEP, but at least one time. Hopefully the student will pass both parts of the GQE and not have to take the test again. If they do not pass both parts, students have up to four (4) additional opportunities while still in high school (2 as a junior and 2 as a senior) to take the part(s) of the GQE they did not pass. A student with a disability wishing to earn a diploma shall retake the GQE in each subject area in which the student did not achieve a passing score as often as required by the student’s individualized education program (IEP), but must take the GQE at least one (1) time. **NOTE:** The GQE will be replaced by end-of-course assessments in Algebra I and English 10, additional information and details are available at: <http://www.doe.state.in.us/istep/pdf/INStatewideAssessmentSystQA-021808.pdf>

ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

There are differences between **accommodations** and **modifications**. **Many testing accommodations are allowed** during the ISTEP+ tests and for the GQE, but **modifications are not allowed**. An accommodation does not change what is being taught or tested. An accommodation “levels the playing field” for students with disabilities. For example, a Braille version of the test is an accommodation for a student with a visual impairment. A Braille version of the test does not change what is being tested, it merely accommodates the student. Additional test time, the use of a scribe or an interpreter, using a word processor (with the grammar-check and spell-check features turned off) are other examples of accommodations which are allowed for ISTEP+ and GQE purposes. Accommodations used for ISTEP+ or GQE purposes should: 1) be accommodations the student uses for instruction and testing during the school year; 2) be accommodations that are specified for the student in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan; and 3) comply with **ISTEP+ Program Manual** requirements concerning accommodations. For example, reading comprehension portions of the ISTEP+ or GQE can not be read to the student even if the IEP or 504 Plan lists this as an accommodation for instruction and testing during the school year. The **ISTEP+ Program Manual** does not allow the reading comprehension components of ISTEP+ or the GQE to be read to the student. The ISTEP+ Program Manual can be accessed at: <http://doe.in.gov/istep/ProgramManual.html>

Modifications actually change what is being taught or tested. **Modifications** are generally **not permitted** if a course is being taken for credit, and **modifications are not allowed** for ISTEP+ or GQE testing. Modifications of test content or of the academic standards being assessed are generally not allowed in any standardized testing situations. For example, students may not be administered shorter versions of the test, offered a reduced number of possible responses, or provided with simplified directions.

Additional information on accommodations and modifications can be found in the **ISTEP+ Program Manual 07-08**. See **Appendix C** of the **ISTEP+ Program Manual 07-08** for charts listing accommodations. The **ISTEP+ Program Manual 07-08** can be found by selecting the **ISTEP InfoCenter** button at: <http://doe.in.gov>

MORE ON THE “EVIDENCE-BASED WAIVER” OR “ALTERNATE DOCUMENTATION” PROCESS...

A student with a disability who does not pass the graduation qualifying examination (GQE) may meet the graduation qualifying examination requirement as described in IC 20-32-4-1 (Graduation Requirements) and IC 20-32-4-5. (NOTE: IC 20-32-4-4 describes a similar process for students who do not have a disability. This section is often confused with IC 20-32-4-5 which applies to students with a disability. Both sections are similar, but NOT identical.). IC 20-32-4-5 is often referred to as the “waiver” process or the “alternate documentation” process, and applies to students with disabilities who have met all graduation requirements except passing one or both parts of the GQE. A diploma earned in this way is an official Indiana high school diploma.

IC 20-32-4-5

Sec.5. (a) This section applies to a student who is a child with a disability (as defined in IC 20-35-1-2).

(b) If the student does not achieve a passing score on the graduation examination, the student’s case conference committee may determine that the student is eligible to graduate if the case conference committee finds the following:

- (1) The student’s teacher of record, in consultation with a teacher of the student in each subject area in which the student has not achieved a passing score, makes a written recommendation to the case conference committee. The recommendation must:
 - (A) be concurred in by the principal of the student’s school; and
 - (B) be supported by documentation that the student has attained the academic standard in the subject area based upon:
 - (i) tests other than the graduation examination; or
 - (ii) classroom work.
- (2) The student meets all of the following requirements:
 - (A) Retakes the graduation examination in each subject area in which the student did not achieve a passing score as often as required by the student’s individualized education program.
 - (B) Completes remediation opportunities provided to the student by the student’s school to the extent required by the student’s individualized education program.
 - (C) Maintains a school attendance rate of at least ninety-five percent (95%) to the extent required by the student’s individualized education program with excused absences not counting against the student’s attendance.
 - (D) Maintains at least a “C” average or the equivalent in the courses comprising the credits specifically required for graduation by rule of the board.[e.g. Those courses required by the State Board of Education.]
 - (E) Otherwise satisfies all state and local graduation requirements.

As added by P.L.1-2005, SEC.16

NOTES:

1. The door never closes on your opportunity to earn a high school diploma. If you are no longer in high school and still need to pass one or both sections of the GQE in order to graduate, you can take the test at specific locations throughout the state. (Passing the GQE first became a requirement for graduation beginning with the Class of 2000.) Call the ISTEP+ Hotline at 1-888-54-ISTEP (1-888-544-7837) for more information.
2. The “evidence-based waiver” or “alternate documentation” process for satisfying the GQE requirement, described above, is taken from IC 20-32-4-5 and is for students with disabilities. For information concerning the “alternate documentation” process to be followed by students who do not have a disability, and who did not achieve a passing score on the GQE, but who meet all other state and local requirements for graduation, refer to IC 20-32-4-4.

3. Legislation referring to ISTEP+ and the GQE can be found in the **ISTEP+ Program Manual 07-08**. The manual can be downloaded from the Indiana Department of Education Website at: <http://www.doe.in.gov> and selecting the ISTEP+ InfoCenter button.
4. Students with disabilities who are not eligible to earn a diploma will generally be eligible to receive a Certificate of Completion. The Certificate of Completion is NOT an academic credential, but students receiving a Certificate of Completion are eligible to participate in any graduation ceremonies the school may sponsor. Students who are on a diploma track but can not meet the requirements to graduate with a diploma may wish to reconvene their case conference committees to revise their IEPs so they can receive a Certificate of Completion.
5. A student with a disability who exits high school with a Certificate of Completion can later decide to return to high school and receive special education and related services **if** less than age 22 **and** have not completed high school graduation requirements and received a diploma. Students with disabilities are entitled to receive special education and related services (a free appropriate public education or FAPE) until they earn a high school diploma or turn age 22, whichever comes first. See **Article 7** at 511 IAC 7-18-2(a). See also:
<http://doe.state.in.us/exceptional/spced/independence/2006-09/INDEP%20Fall%2006%20Certificate.pdf>
6. **Check with your principal or guidance counselor for any changes in state or local graduation requirements. Make sure you have current and accurate information! Schools can have local graduation requirements that are in addition to the state minimum graduation requirements.**
7. See http://www.doe.in.gov/core40/diploma_requirements.html for additional information on course and graduation requirements. There are several ways to meet the GQE requirement including: 1) **pass the GQE**; 2) through the **CORE 40 waiver**; 3) through the **“evidence-based waiver”** [for students **without a disability** see IC 20-32-4-4; for students **with a disability** see IC 20-32-4-5]; and 4) through the **“workforce readiness assessment waiver”** described in IC 20-32-4-4.
8. A copy of the document, **Documents for Students Who Satisfy Course Requirements for Graduation but Who Do Not Satisfy the Graduation Qualifying Examination Requirement**, is available on the Department of Education website at:
<http://doe.in.gov/super/2006/09-September/092206/graduation092206.html> Select the Superintendent’s Mail for September 22, 2006.
9. A **new GQE waiver** option became available as a result of legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2006. This option is known as the **“workforce readiness assessment waiver”** and additional information is available at:
<http://www.doe.state.in.us/core40/pdf/faq.pdf> See also IC 20-32-4-4. This option is described in a **Memorandum** from Jeff Zaring, State Board of Education Administrator, to High School Principals and Superintendents, April 20, 2007 (also on May 19, 2006). See
<http://www.doe.in.gov/super/2007/04-April/042007/workreadiness.pdf>
10. The “C average or equivalent” in courses required by the State Board of Education refers to an overall average grade of “C” (or equivalent) in required courses (e.g. does not include elective courses). Also, a local school can count a “C-“ as a “C” in making the “C average” determination. This is a local decision to be made by the school.
11. The above referenced “waivers” do not actually “waive” the graduation examination requirement. The “waivers” provide “alternate documentation” avenues for students who meet all state and local graduation requirements, except for passing the GQE, to demonstrate their academic proficiency and meet the GQE requirement.